

Subject: Board of Regents, State of Iowa Media Release - Task Force Considers Future Needs of Visually Impaired Children

For Immediate Release

Task Force Considers Future Needs of Visually Impaired Children

Friday, December 9, 2005

URBANDALE—A group of parents, educators and other professionals is studying options for enhancing the education and care of visually impaired students across Iowa. The group, a coordinating council appointed by the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education, will present a report on these options in 2006.

In conjunction with the AEAs and the LEAs, the IBSSS serves more than 500 students at school districts across Iowa and 34 students at the Regent-governed facility in Vinton. The coordinating council is reviewing all services which support the education of students who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities, and will provide recommendations to the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education about how to provide those services in the future in the most effective and efficient manner.

“At this time, no decision has been made about the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School,” said Michael Gartner, President of the Board of Regents. “The coordinating council is still in the process of fact-finding. When the council develops its recommendations, they will be considered by both the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education. That’s not expected to occur until sometime next year,” Gartner said.

The Regents appointed a task force of parents and educators in August 2004 to gather data about the effectiveness and efficiency of services provided by the IBSSS. That task force held public meetings statewide seeking further input from parents and professional service providers. The task force recommended formation of a joint coordinating council with the state board of Education. The council has subsequently held additional meetings to assess the strengths and weaknesses of vision services currently provided and to identify options for improvements.

“The goal is to provide the most effective education and care for visually impaired students in Iowa,” said Gartner. “The task force and the council have been very conscientious in their work over the past 18 months and the Board will consider their recommendations carefully.”

The council will hold another meeting in early January 2006 to provide for additional public input. Materials related to the Coordinating Council are available at the IBSSS and BOR websites.

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WORK PLAN TO IMPLEMENT IBSSS TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Action Requested: Consider approval of the IBSSS work plan to implement the IBSSS Task Force recommendations approved by the Board of Regents in June 2005.

Executive Summary: IBSSS developed a work plan to define further the recommendations approved by the Board and to specify time frames for their implementation.

Background: The IBSSS Task Force, created by the Board of Regents, developed seven recommendations that examined the future needs and solutions for all students who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities. The premise for the work plan is that a long-term educational approach for all students in Iowa who are blind or visually impaired, including those with other disabilities, can be accomplished only through coordination and collaboration with other education entities that share responsibility for these students under federal and state mandates.

Details of the Work Plan:

- Recommendation 1 – *The Board of Regents and the State Board of Education will create a coordinating council to review all services which support the education of students who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities.* A Coordinating Council will be created by September 15, 2005 and will review all services which support the education of students who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities, by October 15, 2005. The review will include an assessment of unmet needs of children who are blind or visually impaired, aged birth to 21, and their families. The Coordinating Council will present its findings to the Board of Regents and to the State Board of Education by February 1, 2006.
- Recommendation 2 – *Provide equitable and timely access to services for students who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities.* Using the results of the assessment, the Coordinating Council will identify gaps in the availability or timeliness of services by September 30, 2005. Options, including interagency agreements, to provide access in an effective and efficient manner will be identified by November 15, 2005. By February 1, 2006, the Council will include recommendations regarding the delivery of services by providers and the coordination of such services to assure that they are complementary, are provided in the most effective and efficient manner, and make maximum use of existing fiscal and personnel resources.
- Recommendation 3 – *Begin discussions between IBSSS and the University of Northern Iowa with the objective of creating a rigorous academic program for students with visual impairments.* Preliminary discussions have begun between IBSSS and the University of Northern Iowa. Recommendations regarding the feasibility of establishing such an academic program will be presented to the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education by February 1, 2006.

- Recommendation 4 – *Create a structure at IBSSS that is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of students for the core and expanded core curriculum, regardless of the students' primary program location.* The IBSSS structure will be reviewed by the interim superintendent regarding the School's flexibility to meet the needs of students for core and expanded core curriculum, regardless of the students' primary program location. A report of the findings and recommendations will be provided to the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education by February 1, 2006.
- Recommendation 5 – *Explore further collaboration between IBSSS and UNI and SUI to enhance services for students with multiple impairments and pursue efficiencies in the delivery of services.* Preliminary discussions have begun and will become more detailed through the participation of UNI and SUI on the Coordinating Council. Recommendations will be presented to the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education by February 1, 2006.
- Recommendation 6 – *Intensify efforts between IBSSS and other agencies to inform parents of children with visual impairments, including those with additional disabilities, of all the services available statewide.* Existing outreach efforts will be reviewed by IBSSS and the Department of Education. By September 30, 2005, the Coordinating Council will conduct an assessment of outreach efforts to inform parents. Recommendations will be presented to the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education by February 1, 2006.
- Recommendation 7 – *Convene a group to develop standards and benchmarks for achievement of the expanded core curriculum for students with visual impairments, including those with additional disabilities.* IBSSS, in coordination with the Department of Education, will convene a group by July 30, 2005 to begin developing standards and benchmarks for achievement of the expanded core curriculum. Preliminary recommendations will be presented to the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education by February 1, 2006. The standards and benchmarks will be disseminated statewide by May 2006.

KEY FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES IN IOWA AND THE IOWA BRAILLE AND SIGHT SAVING SCHOOL

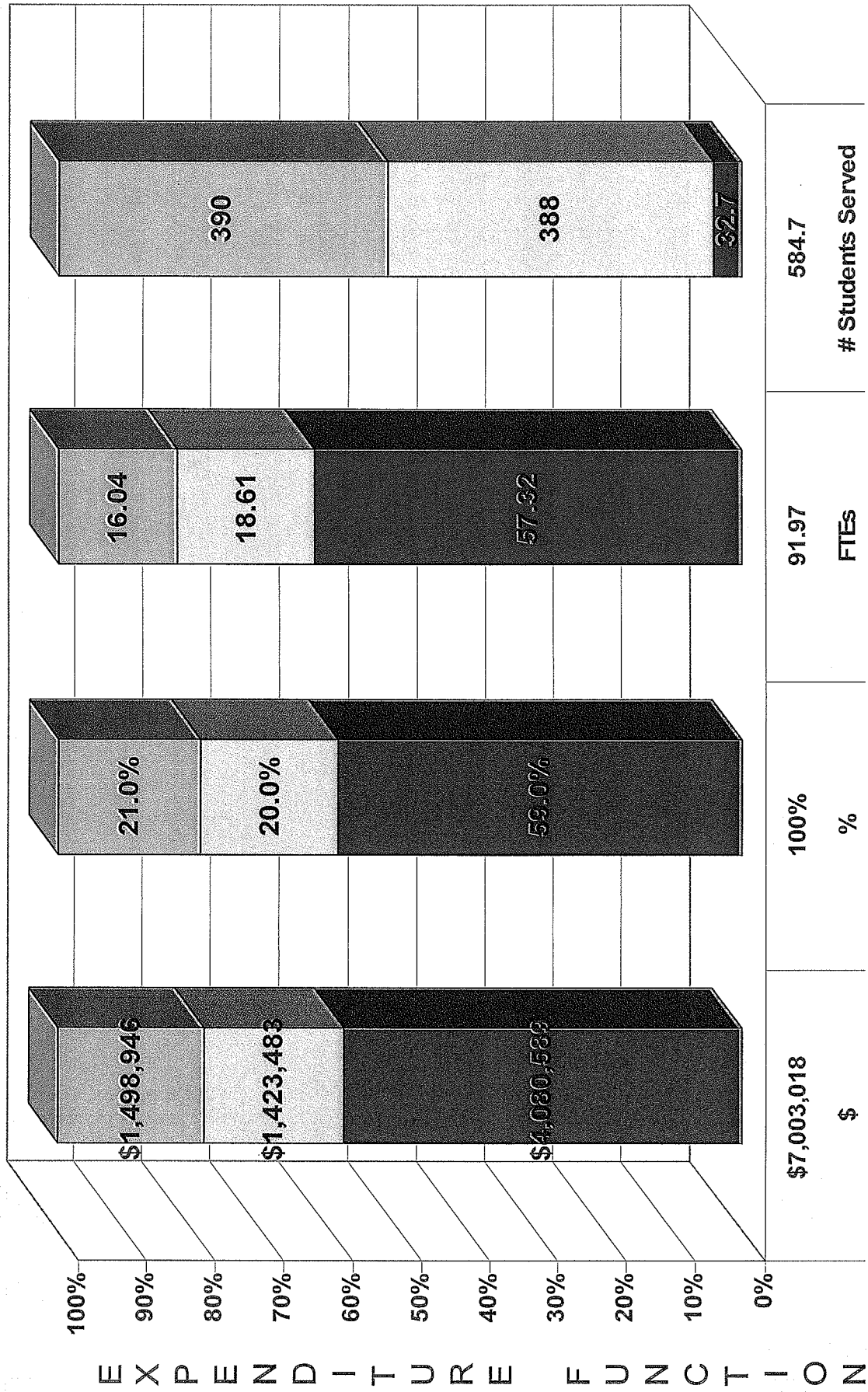
- ☑ What are the ages of blind children in Iowa (2000 estimate) who are receiving services (through IBSSS and the AEAs)?
 - ☞ Birth to 3 = 80
 - ☞ 3 -5 = 75
 - ☞ 6 – 12 = 210
 - ☞ 13 – 21 = 135
- ☑ How many students attend the on-campus program at the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School (Vinton) in 2005-06? 34
 - ☞ Of that number, how many are academic students? 14
 - ◇ 3 students might be considered for post-secondary academic education
 - ◇ 7 students read and write in Braille
 - ☞ How many are non-academic students? 20
 - ◇ 5 students use wheelchairs
 - ◇ 6 students are non-verbal
 - ◇ 16 students are not toilet trained
 - ◇ 17 students cannot read either print or Braille
 - ◇ 17 students require assistance to move from place to place
- ☑ Has there been a decrease in the number of on-campus students?

Yes. In the past 20 years, the on-campus enrollment has decreased by 32 students (-48.5%) from 66 in 1985-86 to 34 in 2005-06.
- ☑ How many students are served off-campus (statewide) in 2005-06 by the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School through contracts with the AEAs and the State Vision Grant? 505
- ☑ How much money did IBSSS spend in FY 2005 for on-campus and statewide services? \$5,579,535
- ☑ Of that amount, how much did IBSSS spend for the on-campus K-12 services (for 33 students)? \$4,080,589 (73%)
 - ☞ How much was spent on instruction? \$1,136,132 (28%)
 - ☞ How much was spent on special services (e.g., speech pathology)? \$297,862 (7%)
 - ☞ How much was spent on buildings and grounds? \$931,148 (23%)
 - ☞ How much was spent on health services, dormitory services, and transportation? \$1,139,572 (28%)

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- ☒ What was the on-campus average cost per student in FY 2005? \$124,788
- ☒ How does that compare with the average per pupil expenditure in public schools? It is \$117,690 higher. According to the Iowa Department of Education "2003-04 Condition of Education Report," the average per pupil expenditure in public schools is \$7,098.
- ☒ How much did IBSSS spend for off-campus statewide services in FY 2005 (for more than 500 students)? \$1,298,946 (27%)

FY05 Total Expenditures, FTEs, Students Served (All Programs/All Funds)



School Year On-Campus K-12 Program
 O&MTVI Contracts with AEA/LEAs
 Statewide Services